

City Council Meeting 4/27/15 Re: Oppose Normandy / Twining up-zoning

Dan Jeffs <danjeffs@gmail.com>

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City Clerk Agenda

To: City Council <CityCouncil@CambridgeMA.GOV>; Lopez, Donna <dlopez@cambridgema.gov>; Paden, Liza <lpaden@cambridgema.gov>;

Clerk Lopez, please enter into the council record. Ms Paden please forward to the Planning Board.

4/27/15

Dear City Councilors and members of the Planning Board,

Please approve Councilor Carlone's alternate proposal of the 12 story, multi-block plan with 50% affordable and middle income housing. From what I gather, Normandy's history with this project has devolved from early campaign donations, to astro-turfing an inclusive neighborhood input phase, to monolith tower, to hardball threats of keeping it lab space. Bottom line, their interest is maximum profits for their investment, neighboring communities are irrelevant. I see a 195' tower like the one proposed and I think of Back Bay around Boylston St. I chose to live in Cambridge because it has a neighborhood feel. I wouldn't want to live in a sterile, 'glass tower' area like Back Bay. It has it's place across the river. Last point, the character that makes Central Sq. a "Cultural District" is a very fragile thing. Funky independent businesses exist here only because of a diverse populace that support them. Middle East. Out of the Blue art gallery. Clover. TT's. Veggie Galaxy. You change the populace when the rent gets too high. Then these businesses evaporate, and you have lost the "Cultural District". You are left with a "Biotech District", another Kendal Sq. Please do not give away our identity.

Thanks for your time and your service.

Sincerely,

Daniel Jeffs
6R Eaton St
Cambridge, MA 02139

Below I wrote this letter for the 4/1/15 meeting of the planning board, and I repeat:

I'm writing to the board to ask that this letter be submitted to the record for today's meeting, which I could not attend due to work.

On Monday morning this week, I walked by my neighbor as she waited for a moving van on Pine St. She is a single mom of two, divorced, middle class. Her daughter Madison and son would play with my kids in the park from time to time. I asked her where she was moving, she said Salem. When I asked why, she said the rent was too high to stay. She said she loved Cambridge and had mixed emotions about leaving, her kids were at King Open, and would have to start over at a new school in a new town, mid semester.

She didn't do anything wrong. She worked hard, was a good mother, and was just squeezed out of the Cambridge rental market. There are larger economic forces at play, her apartment was bought and sold several times in the past few years, to just shy of \$1,000,000 for an ordinary 3 family. This is what's happening right now in Cambridge to our middle class.

Normandy/Twining's propose the following:

-Ignoring current zoning and C2 planning proposals.

-Mixed Use: Taking 4/5ths of the units as maximum profit rental to give to 1% shareholders, and leave 1/5 of potential maximum profits as subsidized units for the non-1% as the cost of doing business.

-Gentrification by economic discrimination. Who are the people who keep moving into the endless luxury filing cabinet towers in Kendal, Boston, East Cambridge? Developers can't seem to build them fast enough. Those towers do not make a community vibrant, they isolate their residents, and impose their presence on the surrounding environment. Twining's target market is the Kendal sq Biotech workforce. Area 4 residents will see rents rise until that demographic is the only one able to afford living here.

-Middle Class housing: The 7 proposed units will not be enough. The Zoning board cannot make demands, but Twining's can offer more if they want more height variance. "According to a September 2013 survey of Boston.com and Craigslist.com, the median monthly rents sought for market rate Cambridge apartments were \$2,385 for a one bedroom unit, \$3,000 for a two bedroom unit and \$3,200 for a three bedroom unit."

source: <http://www.cambridgema.gov/CDD/factsandmaps/demographicfaq.aspx>

-195 foot tall building: This is an opening offer from Twining's, a high ball. We should start negotiating up from the 80 foot zoning, not down from 195. An acceptable height would be somewhere around 90-120 feet. As a neighbor, I feel most strongly about this point.

-Wind: The block of Prospect St between Mass Ave and Bishop Allen is a wind tunnel, because of the 675 Mass Ave tower. The proposed building will have the same effect around Lafayette Sq and Jill Rhone Park, driving people out with howling winds. The Farmer's market tents would all blow away if they tried to setup in the adjacent city lot.

-Shade: In the winter, the proposed building will block out sunlight after 3p completely in Clement Morgan Park, and surrounding housing and as far as Washington St. Why should surrounding residents give up 1 hour of direct sunlight in a time of year when there is only 9 hours of daylight? See link to shade study Winter's solstice:

<http://www.massandmain.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/shadow-animation-winter.mp4>

-Density: "According to the United States Census Bureau, as of the 2010 U. S. Census, Cambridge is the 10th densest incorporated city in the United States." There will never be enough housing in Cambridge, we can only choose how much to grow, and how fast. Zoning is the only check to this growth. Twining's isn't going to loose their shirt in this project, they will make a ton of money either way. Why should they expect a corporate handout in exchange for their 'generous' concessions? In the last five years how many buildings have gone up in Cambridge that are over 100 feet tall? Do we want twice that number in the next 5 years? 10 years?

-Retail: I like the idea of ground floor retail, but only if they provide subsidized/designate Cambridge small independent businesses? I don't want a suburban chain like Panera coming in to 'add character' to this neighborhood. And please no more banks.

In closing, I also support the recommendations of the C2 Committee and points made by 'The Friends of Lafayette Square' organization's mission statement. http://www.friendsoflafayettesquare.org/mission_statement